



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers

March 2, 2007

Latest Traffic Safety News

Survey Finds Healthy Workers More Productive

According to a recent survey from the Principal Financial Group, spending more on employee wellness programs may mean less turnover and better productivity for smaller companies. More employees are taking advantage of onsite health screenings. Seventy-nine percent of employees participated in such screenings in 2006, up from 68 percent the year before. "As employers offer more wellness programs at work, employees will use them," said Jerry Ripperger, director of consumer health at the Principal Financial Group. "It's really a win-win. Healthier employees ultimately lead to a healthier bottom line for employers." The Principal Financial Group, a provider of financial products and services, surveyed 1,197 employees and 630 retirees of small and mid-sized businesses in the fall of 2006.

Source: US Chamber of Commerce, SmartBrief from The Ledger (Lakeland, Fla.)

Older Driver Retraining: A Systematic Review Of Evidence Of Effectiveness

The safety of older drivers is of growing concern as fatal crashes in this group increase annually. The objective was to systematically and critically appraise the evidence on effectiveness of older driver retraining. SUMMARY: The current evidence on the effectiveness of retraining aimed at older drivers is limited but sufficiently encouraging to merit further research. IMPACT ON INDUSTRY: Given the potential cost savings to the insurance and health care industries, as well as the safety impact to the general population, the research agenda in this area requires much greater attention.

Source: Kua A, Korner-Bitensky N, Desrosiers J, Man-Son-Hing M, Marshall S. J Safety Res 2007

Web Sites Publicize Driving Mistakes

Have you ever accidentally cut someone off in traffic, flubbed a parking job or used your car for personal grooming? You could find yourself in a very public place: the Internet. Web sites such as BadDriving.com and IParkLikeAnIdiot.com are putting a face, a name and even a license plate number on these driver mishaps. "It's impossible to know how many of the Web sites exist, but the number is still growing, reported Washington News4's Miguel Almaguer. Some motorists complain of privacy concerns, but a license plate is public information. Lance Hoffman, a professor at George Washington University, said he finds such Web sites distasteful. "You can concoct all sorts of stories about a person or firm that may not be true," he said. "Then you can post video ... even set up video or photographs that may not be true representations of what happened." Source: NBC4.com, February 19

New Video Warns AZ Drivers About Driver Distraction Dangers

A Scottsdale man's obsessed with the driver distraction problem has produced a video and Web site that's being promoted by Arizona safety and law-enforcement officials. The Department of Public Safety, the Governor's Office of Highway Safety and the Arizona Chapter of the National Safety Council conducted a news conference recently to support the effort. Brown, the director of Safety Perspectives Inc., said his 29-minute video is designed to provide an entertaining way to enforce the message. "What we hope is that a good bunch of knowledge presented in this format will make it stick in people's minds," Brown said. "The primary message is, when you're behind the wheel, you're in the driving business." For further information, visit:

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/0216toetag0216.html>

Source: The Arizona Republic, Feb. 16



Ticket Masking Practice Being Questioned

California state legislators are scrutinizing the long-standing practice of "ticket masking". An estimated 700 or more drivers each year in California are arrested or cited for drunken driving but end up being sent to traffic violator classes to have the citation erased from their records. Although ticket masking happens often for lesser violations, such as running stop signs and some speeding cases, state law didn't intend this practice to apply to serious violations such as drunken or reckless driving, or hit-and-run. Source: The Sacramento Bee, February 12

Center for Auto Safety Seeks Total Ban on Cell Phone Use While Driving

Clarence Ditlow, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety in Washington, D.C. has petitioned the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to ban the use of both handheld and hands-free phones -- any time a vehicle is in motion. According to Ditlow, "Most people can't talk on a cell phone and walk in a straight line at the same time." Source: Detroit Free Press, February 18

City Officials Worry Digital Billboards Another Driver Distraction

A Minnetonka, MN court fight highlights the debate over billboards as a driver distraction. In December, Clear Channel erected two eye-popping digital billboards along the freeway in Minnetonka and city officials pulled the plug by cutting the power. The company has also installed eight digital billboards in the Twin Cities and in Las Vegas, Cleveland, Tampa, Fla., Milwaukee and Albuquerque, N.M. with about 400 of the billboards erected nationally. The glowing signs offer advertisers new means of cutting through the urban clutter with the ability to change messages every 8 seconds. Officials worry that the bright billboards are another dangerous distraction for drivers, many of whom are already multitasking behind the wheel. For further information, visit: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17264127> Source: MSNBC, February 21

Driverless Cars Soon To Be Tested In Urban Environment

Driving through the busy downtown area of any city can be an exercise in frustration, due to heavy traffic, confusing signage, potholes and aggressive drivers. But imagine the panic if motorists knew that some of those drivers were robots running on software built to guide unmanned cars through city streets. "It's a little bit scary to think about (our robotic car among) other human drivers or other really large vehicles," Mike Montemerlo, senior research engineer at Stanford University's Artificial Intelligence Lab, said last week. Montemerlo is one of the lead scientists developing Stanford's newest robotic contestant in DARPA's Urban Challenge, a road race of artificial intelligence set for November. For further information, visit: http://news.com.com/Drivers+ed+for+robot+racers/2100-11394_3-6160344.html

Tennessee Legislators Introduce Bills to Outlaw Drowsy Driving

Tennessee state legislators are introducing two new bills targeting drowsy driving. Both the state Senate and House have introduced legislation that would permit police to charge drowsy drivers with criminal negligence if they injure or kill someone because a lack of sleep impaired their driving.

Vermont Bill Seeks to Curb Driver Distractions

Vermont lawmakers are considering legislation designed to keep drivers free from a range of potential distractions. If passed, the bill would prohibit drivers from eating, drinking, smoking, reading, writing, personal grooming, playing a musical instrument, interacting with pets or cargo, and talking on a cell phone or using a PDA. Legislators in Maryland and Texas are considering similar bills. "Cell phones attracted people to this issue," Matt Sundeen, a transportation analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures, told CBS. "Now that people are more focused on distracted driving issues, they're beginning to talk about the broader range of distractions." A study by the Virginia Tech Transportation



Institute, released last year by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, found that distracted drivers were involved in nearly eight out of 10 collisions or near crashes.

News from the USDOT

NHTSA Wants To Close Public Website On Car Complaints

Ever wonder if other vehicle owners are experiencing the same problems with their vehicle that you are? A website run by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) is where you can find millions of consumer complaints about thousands of vehicles by year, make and model. All free of charge. Now it might be closed down. Congress ordered the Early Warning website in 2002 to track vehicle safety and prevent deaths. Now NHTSA's trying to change the rules and take away those public complaints. It's the auto companies that want to remove the online postings. They claim that the complaints expose "trade secrets" and hurt competition. Consumer groups are protesting, accusing NHTSA, , of trying to protect big business instead of consumers. For further information, visit: <http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=940491> Source: KSL-TV, February 28

Work-Home

National Youth Traffic Safety Month, May 2007

National Youth Traffic Safety Month addresses the number one cause of death for youth in our nation. Every year over 6,000 youth die in traffic related crashes. Many of these crashes are caused by avoidable behavior. The theme of National Youth Traffic Safety Month is "Safety is NO Accident!" Safety is not an accident; youth can take specific actions to be safer as drivers and passengers. National Youth Traffic Safety Month is also a time to celebrate and promote those who work to help keep youth safe on the roads. Youth will be participating in activities to thank and support those working so hard to protect them. National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS), a nonprofit coalition of youth led and youth serving national organizations that focus on youth traffic safety and health, organized National Youth Traffic Safety Month efforts. For more information, visit: www.noys.org

New GA State Law Places 'Coaches' In Car With Teens

A new GA state law now requires 16-year-olds to have more driving experience before they apply for a license. Georgia parents are being pushed to spend even more quality time in the car with their teens. This is in response to a new state law, known as Joshua's law that requires that 16-year-olds get more training before they are issued a license. The law is named for a Cartersville teen that died in 2003 after losing control of a car on a wet roadway. It makes driver's education mandatory for 16-year-olds seeking a license and gives parents the option of spending a few hundred dollars for a classroom setting and a professional to teach their kid how to drive or they can do it themselves, the cheaper alternative. Do-it-yourselfers still must sign up their 16-year-old for an online driver's ed course — offered for between \$50 to \$100 by a number of driving schools. And after the class requirement is met, a mom, dad or guardian must log 40 hours of drive time in the car with teens and swear in writing to the state they followed through with their obligation. For further information, visit:

<http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/stories/2007/02/16/0216metdrive.html>

Source: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 19

Signs For Novice Drivers Proposed In Illinois

Legislation introduced in Illinois would require drivers under 18 to have to attach signs to their vehicles indicating that they're new drivers. The signs would have to be visible every time a minor takes the wheel until he or she gets an unrestricted license at age 18. The signs would help inexperienced teen drivers by making other motorists more alert and more patient. The signs would also help police



enforce teen driving restrictions that apply only to a specific and narrow age group, such as a state law that prohibits 16-year-old drivers from having more than one non-family member passenger with them under the age of 20. The UK requires student drivers to attach a plate with a red letter "L" on the back of their cars and after passing their driving tests, new drivers have the option of carrying a plate with a green "L". The practice is also required in many other parts of the world, including Ireland, India, Singapore and Australia. If the law were passed, Illinois would be the first U.S. state to have signs identifying young drivers. For further information, visit: <http://www.sjr.com/Sections/News/Stories/108500.asp>

Behind The Wheel, Teens Texting

The latest trend with teen drivers behind the wheel is text messaging while driving. Teens are sending and receiving text messages via cell phone while they're rolling down the road with radios blasting. No one has done a study on how teens who are driving text but anecdotal analysis by people who know gives the average driver just one more thing to worry about out there. While several states (like New Jersey) ban aspects of cell-phone use for teenagers and adults, none specifically mentions texting while driving, according to the National Transportation Safety Board. A proposed law in Virginia would preclude drivers ages 15, 16 and 17 from talking, texting, or taking photos on state roads. Logically, though, it would seem that a ban of cell phones would preclude texting, notes Russ Rader, an executive with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Source: The Philadelphia Inquirer, February 25

Insurer Offers Free Cameras So Parents See Teens' Bad Driving Habits

American Family Insurance will launch a program that captures on video what many adults always suspected but couldn't quite prove: the risky things teenage drivers do behind the wheel. The Madison-based insurer said it will offer free installation and operation of a small video camera near the rearview mirror to record what happens inside the vehicle 10 seconds before and 10 seconds after a triggering event such as hard braking or a sharp turn. The data will be transmitted each night via cellular technology to the company that sells the system, is analyzed weekly, graded for riskiness and put on a Web site so parents can check it out on their home computers and talk to their teenagers about it. The goal is to nip unsafe driving habits early on.

For the insurer, it ultimately might lead to reduced accident claims that will cover some of the undisclosed cost of the program. Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

International Traffic Safety News

Free Map Guides Drivers In Beijing

Drivers from other parts of the country will no longer have to worry about getting lost traveling in Beijing with the help of an itinerary map. At all 16 checkpoints entering the city, the police will print out a free itinerary map for drivers that leads the way from the checkpoint to their destination. This service is aimed at easing traveling inconveniences and is based on a route-seeking system that compiles routes according to different automobile types and the traffic situation. Officials warn that drivers must tell the police their automobile type in case some types of automobiles are banned in some areas. For further information, link to the story in the China Daily: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/citylife/2007-02/27/content_814700.htm

UK Safety Groups Urge Focus on Road-User Behavior By At-Work Drivers

Alphabet, a UK fleet leasing company released findings from their 2007 Risk and Reward survey. Eighty percent of drivers questioned in the survey said company policies had no effect on their driving behavior. Survey found that few companies focused on managing at-work road safety with only 18 of 251 companies carrying out recommended driver risk assessments. Motorists Forum wants



government to review basic driving test, training, retesting. It is estimated that there are about 1,000 deaths on UK roads each year involving people who were at work at the time, with a further 13,000 seriously injured. Between one-quarter and one-third of all road accidents involve someone who was working. Alphabet commercial director Richard Schooling said: 'Businesses still have much work to do to turn policies and promises into practical action steps that will increase safety and cut costs.'

Source: FleetNewsNet, February 22

Worrying Gap' In Duty Of Care

In a LeasePlan survey, findings show a 'worrying gap' in the understanding of issues surrounding employers' duty of care. A third of UK human resource and finance directors are unaware their company has duty-of-care responsibilities over personal cars used by employees for business purposes. The survey also demonstrates the vital role of the professional fleet manager to make their firm aware that it is legally responsible for the condition and safety of all vehicles used for work-related journeys, irrespective of whether they are company or privately owned cars. With corporate manslaughter laws on the horizon, firms are beginning to understand that employees have to be in safe, well-maintained and suitable vehicles. Source: FleetNewsNet, February 27